

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

GUARDIAN ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION, LOS ANGELES UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
CALIFORNIA HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES AGENCY, CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH,
AND LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH.

OAH CASE NO. 2010110301

ORDER DENYING CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL
HEALTH'S MOTION TO DISMISS
ITSELF AS A PARTY

On November 8, 2010, Student filed a Due Process Hearing Request (complaint) against the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), California Department of Education (CDE), California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS), California Department of Mental Health (CDMH), and Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH). On November 23, 2010, CDMH filed a Motion to Dismiss, alleging that it is not a responsible educational agency.¹ On November 30, 2010, Student filed an opposition.²

APPLICABLE LAW

Special education due process hearing procedures extend to the parent or guardian, to the student in certain circumstances, and to "the public agency involved in any decisions

¹ CDMH also requested that the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) dismiss Issue Two because OAH does not have jurisdiction to hear Student's non-special education claims. On November 30, 2010, OAH granted LACOE's motion to dismiss Issue Two, therefore CDMH's request is moot.

² On December 3, 2010, CHHS requested to join CDMH's Motion to Dismiss. CHHS' request is untimely as the other parties have filed responses to CDMH's motion. Therefore, CHHS it needs to file its own motion.

regarding a pupil.” (Ed. Code, § 56501, subd. (a).) A “public agency” is defined as “a school district, county office of education, special education local plan area, . . . or any other public agency . . . providing special education or related services to individuals with exceptional needs.” (Ed. Code, §§ 56500 and 56028.5.)

A student who has been determined to be an individual with exceptional needs or is suspected of needing mental health services may, after the Student’s parent has consented, be referred to a community mental health service in accordance with Government Code section 7576 when the student meets criteria for referral specified in California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 60040, and the school district has, in accordance with specific requirements, prepared a referral package and provided it to the community mental health service. (Ed. Code, § 56331, subd. (a); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 60040, subd. (a).)

If required by a student’s individualized education program (IEP), CDMH, or a community mental health service agency designated by CDMH, is responsible for the provision of mental health services after the completion of mental health assessment. (Govt. Code, § 7576, subd. (a) and (b).) CDMH has designated by regulation that the community mental health service agency of student’s county of origin is responsible for conducting the mental health assessment and provision of mental health services. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 60200, subd. (c).)

The purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et. seq.) is to “ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education” (FAPE), and to protect the rights of those children and their parents. (20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)(1)(A), (B), and (C); see also Ed. Code, § 56000.) A party has the right to present a complaint “with respect to any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to such child.” (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(6); Ed. Code, § 56501, subd. (a) [party has a right to present a complaint regarding matters involving proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, assessment, or educational placement of a child; the provision of a FAPE to a child; the refusal of a parent or guardian to consent to an assessment of a child; or a disagreement between a parent or guardian and the public education agency as to the availability of a program appropriate for a child, including the question of financial responsibility].) The jurisdiction of OAH is limited to these matters. (*Wyner v. Manhattan Beach Unified Sch. Dist.* (9th Cir. 2000) 223 F.3d 1026, 1028-1029.)

DISCUSSION

CDMH asserts that it is not an appropriate party to this action because the responsibility for conducting any mental health assessment and provision of mental health services for Student rests with LACDMH. Student asserts that CDMH is an appropriate party in this action because LACDMH has refused to assess Student for eligibility for mental health services, and therefore the responsibility to ensure Student’s assessment rests upon CDMH.

CDMH relies on *Student v. California Dept. of Mental Health* (2009) Cal.Offc.Admin.Hrngs. Case No. 2009050920, for its contention that it is not a proper party to this action. In that case, CDMH was found not to be a responsible public agency. However, that case is distinguishable from this matter because Sacramento County Department of Behavioral and Health Services, Division of Mental Health acknowledged that it was responsible for providing student's mental health services as the county of origin and willing to provide services, including a residential placement. In contrast, in this case, LACDMH purportedly denied any responsibility to provide Student with mental health services due to the Governor's October 8, 2010 veto of state funding to county mental health agencies. Because LACDMH purportedly refused to provide Student with mental health services, such as not attending Student's November 2, 2010 IEP meeting to discuss its assessment findings and the possible provision of mental health services, a triable issue for hearing exists whether CDMH is responsible to provide the requested mental health assessment pursuant to Government Code, section 7576, subdivision (a). Accordingly, CDMH's motion to dismiss itself as a party is denied.

ORDER

1. CDMH's Motion to Dismiss itself as a party is denied.

Dated: December 6, 2010

/s/

PETER PAUL CASTILLO
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings